DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 259 985 SO 016 695

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TITLE Routinization of a Community Psychology Program: Passages and Cycles.
PUB DATE 22 Mar 85
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association, (Boston, MA, March 21-24, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Case Studies; *Educational Change; *Graduate School Faculty; Graduate Students; *Graduate Study; Higher Education; Masters Programs; Program Descriptions; Program Design; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation; *Psychology
IDENTIFIERS *Community Psychology; Evaluation Research; *Indiana University of Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

This case study describes the evolution of a Master's program in community psychology from its inception in 1976 through 1984. Yin's (1978) discussion of the critical events in the routinization of innovations and his emphasis on passages and cycles are used to analyze the development of the Master's program in community psychology at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The earliest or improvisation stage occurred at a time when the university was growing and community psychology was becoming an increasingly popular field nationally. A new faculty member was hired to lead the program. When this person left and a replacement was hired, the program moved into an expansion phase which was characterized by several crises. These included problems with faculty, student recruitment, and funding for mental health programs. The third or disappearance phase began with the development of a doctoral program in clinical psychology, concern over allocation of resources between undergraduate and graduate programs, and a move toward providing more marketable skills to the private sector as well as to public agencies. Thus while the program continues to exist and develop, it is no longer an innovation. (IS)

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ROUTINIZATION OF A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM:

PASSAGES AND CYCLES

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Presented at
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Boston, MA
March 22, 1985

SP 026 699

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ROUTINIZATION OF A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY M.A. PROGRAM: PASSAGES AND CYCLES

Mitchell Fleischer

In the twenty years since its "invention," training in Community Psychology has evolved in a variety of directions. A look at the APA Guide to Graduate Study in Psychology & Related Fields (1984) as well as the membership of the Council of Community Psychology Program Directors makes it clear that the majority of training programs in Community Psychology are "clinical/community" programs that place an emphasis on clinical practice in community settings. A smaller group consists of those programs known as "free standing" community programs, that provide doctoral level training in less clinically oriented community based interventions. Finally, there is another small and perhaps growing group of Master's level programs in community. How have some Master's programs survived, and perhaps thrived, while doctoral programs at highly prestigious universities have withered and died?

One way to answer this question can be found in the "life histories" of such Master's programs. A case study can provide information about events that occur during the life of a program that influence its form and its ability to survive. Yin (1978, 1981) has discussed the use of case studies as a research strategy to study the implementation and routinization of innovations. A graduate program in Community Psychology can easily be seen as an innovation that has been introduced into the context of a psychology department. In fact, Fairweather and his colleagues (Fairweather, Fergus, & Mavis, 1984) have done extensive work attempting to disseminate nationally a particular type of community psychology training program as an innovation.

The innovation process has been conceptualized in several ways. From the perspective of the user of the innovation, one common scheme (Tornatzky, et al, 1983) is to view the process as including several stages, for example: awareness (learning about the innovation), matching (the innovation with an organizational problem), adoption (the act of deciding to accept the innovation), implementation (actually setting the innovation up), and routinization (complete acceptance of the innovation). For purposes of this paper, only the last stage is of much interest. It takes place after the decison has been made to establish a Community Psychology program, and it is the stage in which the program develops and takes form.

Yin (1978) has defined the critical events in an innovation's routinization as being those concerned with resource support. The idea is that the availability of resources is the main determinant of an innovation's survival. Yin proposes that there are five types of resources involved in supporting an organizational innovation: budgetary resources, personnel resources, training, organizational governance, and supplies and maintenance. Yin suggests that evidence of resource support can be observed as a series of what he calls "passages and cycles." Passages are one time transitions from one organizational state to another, such as moving from soft to hard money, while cycles are recurring organizational events such as annual budgeting. The more passages and cycles an innovation has passed through, the more "routinized" Yin says it is. Based on these passages and cycles Yin proposes three stages of routinization: Improvisation, Expansion, and Disappearence. The Improvisation stage is the early period shortly after the innovation has been implemented. In this stage the innovation may or may not go through any passages or cycles. In the Expansion stage the innovation goes through several passages and cycles as it becomes more widespread and accepted in the organization. Finally, in the Disappearance stage, the innovation goes through the remaining passages and cycles as it "disappears" <u>as an innovation</u>,

i.e. it becomes so much a routine part of organizational life that it is no longer considered to be "new" or "innovative".

Yin's notion provides a convenient framework for analyzing the life history of an innovation such as a community psychology program. Figure 1 shows how Yin (1978) relates passages and cycles with routinization. The program under study in this paper is at Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP). Some information about the setting is in order before launching into the case study itself.

IUP is the largest of 14 universities in the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (SSHE). The SSHE is in fact the old state teacher's college system, and IUP is the oldest and by far the largest university in the system, dating from 1876, with a present enrollment of over 12,000. It is also the only university in the system authorized to offer the doctoral degree. The Psychology Department is widely recognized as being one of the best departments in the university. This recognition comes in many forms, the most prominent of which is the increased allocation of resources including personnel, equipment and travel money. The department presently has 21 full time faculty, with one additional person being hired this year.

IMPROVISATION STAGE (1976-78)

Yin describes the Improvisation stage as one in which the innovation begins to be used. However, it need not pass through any passages or cycles in this stage (although it may). For the sake of context the following describes the adoption and implementation of the program as well the improvisation stage. "In the beginning" there were clinical psychologists and experimental psychologists at IUP. And they did not get along very well. In 1976 the department was primarily oriented toward undergraduate education. There were two graduate programs, a small clinical M.A. and an even smaller general/experimental M.A.. The general/experimental program was

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clearly dying, while the clinical program showed definite signs of growth. The department and the unviersity as a whole were still growing, and faculty were being added to the department on a fairly regular basis. By 1976 several of the experimental faculty (with one social psychologist as the main actor) began to press hard for the development of a M.A. program in Community Psychology. Nationally, Community Psychology was seen as an increasingly visible, even trendy area to get into. Politically, it seemed likely there would be support for spending in the human services, especially mental health. This, combined with the interests of several powerful faculty from the experimental faction made a community program seem to be a natural move for a growing department. Moreover, the department had received permission to fill a new position for the coming (76-77) academic year. Thus, the decision was made to hire a community psychologist and move toward a graduate program in that area.

That person was indeed hired, but he was someone right out of graduate school. This made it difficult for him to "take charge" right away. Thus, it was more than a year before the program was fully formed. Another year was needed for full approval by the university senate and other powers that be. During those two years, the community psychologist taught courses in what came to be known as the "clinical/community" M.A. program. Most of the students in this program had a traditional clinical orientation, but a few were more community, or at least community mental health oriented. A class of 4 students was admitted to begin study in the "real" community program in the Fall of 1978. At that time the "clinical/community" program reverted to being a traditional clinical program.

The Community Psychology program that was developed consisted of seven required courses, a practicum, a thesis, and three open electives. The required courses consisted of two courses taught by the community psychologist (Community Psychology, Evaluation Research), two taught by the social psychologist (Environmental

Psychology, Psychology of Social Change), two taught by an organizational psychologist (Organizational Psychology, and Multivariate Statistics), and a Research Design course taken by all graduate students in the department. Students also took a full time practicum for a semester, three electives from anywhere in the university, and a two semester thesis. The three faculty who each taught two courses in the program constituted the Community Sub-committee of the department's Graduate Committee, which provided oversight and governance. In addition to this formal structure, the program was assigned four of the department's nine graduate assistantships.

Thus ends the improvisation stage. In this stage the program made it through three passages, but no cycles. A hard money position was created for the program and a "community psychologist" job description was formally created and filled in the department. Moreover the formal program itself was passed by the university's bureaucracy, a passage under "organizational governance."

THE EXPANSION STAGE (1978-1981)

The Expansion stage had a very clear beginning. The original community pscyhologist, hired in 1976, resigned in the Spring of 1978 and new one was hired (the author) to begin in the Fall of that year. He too was hired directly out of graduate school. Thus, another year was spent watching a new faculty member grope about. During this year clashes developed between the social psychologist (who might be termed a "founding father) and the new community psychologist, and with the program's students. The primary differences were philosophical. The social psychologist held a strong social activist, social change perspective, yet believed that much of the work of a community psychologist could be done in laboratory research. The community psychologist took an equally strong position that students were to be trained to work in the community, and therefore had to spend much of their time, and do all of their

research there. He also took a much less sanguine position regarding the potential for social change resulting from the work of M.A. level community psychologists. The students, as a third force, tended to be primarily interested in getting jobs and seemed to see little relevance in the social psychologist's position. Thus, within a year, the social psychologist withdrew totally from the program and his two courses were removed from the program's curriculum. The result of this was that students had two fewer required courses and thereby two more free electives.

The second year of the program also provoked a potential crisis, in that a class of one student was admitted. In addition, three of the four students who had completed the first year dropped out of the program. At this point there could have been real trouble. Fortunately, the department still perceived itself as growing and thus took a fairly laissez-faire attitude toward the program. No action was taken against the program, although no resources were added that might have enhanced its growth.

Over the next few years the program took in classes of 3,4, and 6 (6 was considered the optimum number). These classes varied considerably in quality, from excellent to minimally acceptable. In addition to this growth, one change took place in the university that enhanced the program. The university strengthened its Center for Community Affairs, a community service and research center on campus. This provided research opportunities for both faculty and students. As a result of his involvement with the center and some of the program's students, one of the experimental psychologists in the department began to assume a full identity as a community psychologist.

In 1980 (during the program's third year) Ronald Reagan was elected President. The almost immediate result of his election was a significant decline in funding for human services and research on social problems. One particularly dramatic example of this was the sudden disappearance of the Carter mental health program, the Mental Health

Systems Act. This not only eliminated funding for Community Mental Health Centers, but also drastically reduced the funding available for evaluation research activities in mental health, a major focus of the program. Another result of the Reagan administration budget cuts was the drastic decline in interest in Community Psychology. Community Psychology seemed to be dead or dying, or at least clinically depressed (Danish, 1981). This decline, or perceived decline resulted in reduced applications and admissions nationwide for community programs. Oddly enough, this decline did not occur at IUP; applications remained at a relatively stable, though low level.

Another influence on the program was the personal evolution of the faculty. The "official" community psychologist developed an interest in program evaluation as a specialty area. Initially this seemed highly desirable as there appeared to be a very wide open job market for students with specialties in this area. The "new" community psychologist (former experimental faculty) developed an interest in information systems for human service agencies. The interests of these two faculty, combined with the strong involvement of an Industrial/Organizational Psychologist in the department resulted in students being trained broadly as social/behavioral science researchers with skills applicable to a variety of field settings.

In Yin's terms this probably could be considered to be the end of the Expansion Stage. The program had passed through several passages and cycles at this point. It survived the turnover of two key individuals, first the original community psychologist, then the social psychologist who was a founding father. Several new positions were created; formally the program was given four graduate assistantships; and informally a new faculty member was added in the form of the converted experimental faculty member. The program had survived several budget cycles without loss of resources.

THE DISAPPEARANCE STAGE (1981-1984)

Simultaneous with the stabilization in the community program, was an improvement in the research atmosphere in the university. Funding for research and conference travel increased considerably, as did funding for grant-seeking travel. Thus, the research atmosphere, university wide, was improved. In addition, there was a dramatic change in the clinical program. Although the clinical program had a fairly stable body of students, it appeared clear to many faculty that the clinical master's degree was becoming increasingly marginal within psychology. A proposal was submitted to the department to start a Psy.D. program and to drop the clinical M.A.. Surprisingly, this was accepted with almost no dissension. Even die hard anti-clinical experimentalists seemed to agree that this would be a good move for the department. One reason for this may have been the fairly rapid decline in undergraduate psychology enrollments in the early 1980s. Increased graduate training may have been seen as the best hope for a department that was beginning to look a bit long on faculty. Moreover, the Psy.D. program was introduced in a very politically astute manner. Two courses from the community program (Community Psychology and Evaluation Research) were included as required courses, as were courses taught by several of the experimental faculty. This effectively co-opted several faculty who might have opposed the program.

The Psy.D. program was approved at all levels in the university by the Fall of 1983. In addition to this approval the department was allocated two additional slots for clinical faculty. As a result of this new program the system of departmental governance over graduate programs changed. The Graduate Committee (and its Clinical and Community subcommittees) was dissolved, and two completely separate committees were created. Each program was granted "official" status by the university's Graduate

School (previously the department's graduate programs were officially regarded as one), and each program's director accorded "director" status.

In addition to the changing status of the program, new alliances were formed within the department. It was noted earlier that the two major "factions" in the department during the 1970s were clinical and general/experimental. Initially the community program was clearly allied with the experimental faction. As the Psy.D. program developed it became essential that there be greater cooperation between the clinical and community graduate programs. Thus, cooperation has clearly become the norm between the two programs. In fact a new problem has arisen between the graduate programs and the undergraduate program. Undergraduate enrollments in psychology have begun to go back up. The growth in the graduate program is now seen by many faculty as taking resources from the "bread & butter" undergraduate program. This problem is just beginning to emerge, although it is apparently a replay of a fight that took place in the early 1970s when graduate study was first introduced to the department.

During this time period the national economy went into its recovery. The recovery of course was accompanied by a rise in interest in advanced technology, entrepreneurship, and business in general. Even within the human services the words "entrepreneur" and "for-profit" have become common. Politically, government at both the state and national levels has become quite conservative and primarily concerned with cutting budgets. "New" and "innovative" human service programs, especially ones concerned with "social change" have become pretty unwelcome. In response to this IUP's Community Psychology program has placed a greater emphasis on providing more flexible, generalizable skills. As noted above, the program already had evolved into one that emphasized fairly broad social/behavioral science research skills. Students are now encouraged to develop areas of specialization in which they will be able to

apply those skills after graduation. Several students have taken a "business/training" orientation, taking courses in management and training that will allow them to apply evaluation type skills in training divisions of private sector corporations. Others have more traditional interests in human service delivery or in policy issues. The flexible research orientation, combined with the community psychology emphasis on an ecological approach to problem solving, appears to be in reasonable demand by employers, although apparently not as much with potential students.

In terms of passages and cycles, several additional ones were completed during this period. The program received (although indirectly) additional resources for travel and research. Training was provided to faculty in the program in the form of a sabbatical leave related to community psychology and in the form of support to attend relevant workshops. These kinds of support have been provided over at least two budget cycles. The program also survived a change in organizational status, or perhaps more accurately it was finally granted appropriate status. A new required course on Information Systems was added to the curriculum. Finally, what might be called "supply and maintenance" is being provided in the form of small internal research grants for both faculty and graduate students. Perhaps most important however is the sense that the program is no longer "new." Thus, it can be said to have "disappeared" in the department as an innovation. There would appear to be no internal threats to its survival. If the present community psychologist were to leave it seems likely that he would be replaced by another. The only obvious threats are questions about the continued supply of qualified students.

Discussion

Reviewing this case study it seems that four factors affected the form that this program took over time. The first was the hiring of new, inexperienced faculty, right

out of graduate school for a leadership role in the program. This resulted in there being relatively ineffective leadership for considerable periods of time, as well as somewhat reduced research productivity. This may have reduced the program's visibility by some unknown amount, thereby reducing enrollments. Another factor was the relative lack of concern about the program by the department and the university's administration. In one sense this was very convenient in that it may have saved the program's life during a period of low enrollment. On the other hand, it meant that the program did not receive additional resources that might have helped it grow. Moreover, it reduced the faculty's motivation to push themselves to make the program grow. A third factor was the changing social and economic scene at the national level. Community Psychology and Evaluation Research both hit hard times in the 1980s. This probably hurt enrollments, at the same time pushing the program's emphasis to change away from traditional areas of community psychology.

The final factor to be considered was the training of the "community psychologist" who directed (and directs) the program. His graduate training was primarily in the methodology of conducting community and organizationally based research. Thus, his concern, particularly in the early days of the program, was for what he knew best. The program evolved to train broadly based field researchers because that was what he perceived himself to be. That has proved to be a fortuitous flexibility, in that the shift toward greater emphasis on private sector, non-human services work has been facilitated.

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FIGURE 1

Organizational Passages and Cycles Related to Routinization

Type of Resource or Operation	Passages	Cycles
1. Budget	Innovation supports changes from soft to hard money (2)[a]	Survives annual budget cycles
2. Personnel		
Jobs	Functions become part of job descriptions or prerequisites (5)	---
Incumbent turnover	---	Survives introduction of new personnel (9) Survives promotion of key personnel (8)
3. Training		
Pre-practice	Skills become part of professional standards, professional school curriculum (7)	---
In-service	---	Skills taught during many training cycles
4. Organizational Governance	Establishment of appropriate organizational status (3) Use of innovation becomes part of statute, regulation, manual, etc. (6)	Attainment of widespread use (10)
5. Supply and Maintenance	Supply and maintenance provided by agency or on long-term (contract) basis (4)	Survives equipment turnover (1)

[a]Numbers refer to ten passages and cycles studied in actual life histories (see Chapter VII, Table 11).

From Yin (1978)

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